

Introduction and Summary

The Vision

The Upper River Master Plan presents a bold vision for developing the Mississippi riverfront into a regional park amenity in north and northeast Minneapolis. The need for action is clear: heavy industry on the river continues to pose land-use conflicts, while adjacent neighborhoods struggle to provide a quality of environment that attracts new investment. The opportunity is also clear: ***There is only one Mississippi***, and the Upper River is the best potential large-scale amenity awaiting development in the City of Minneapolis.

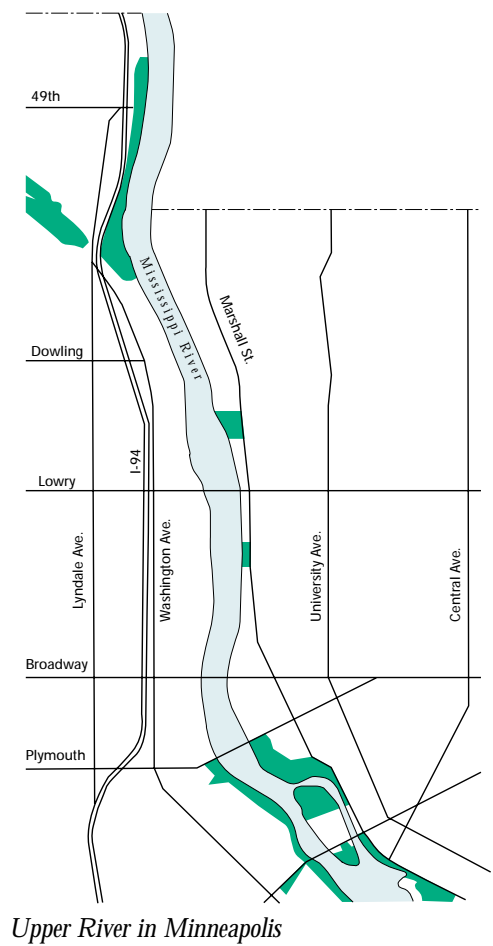
Over 50 percent of the linear riverfront along the Upper River is currently owned by public agencies. The Master Plan shows how these parcels can be linked into a continuous park system to create an amenity that will extend the intrinsic value of the river into local neighborhoods and the region, and provide new destinations for visitors that celebrate Minneapolis as a city on the Mississippi.

Master Plan Objectives

- ✓ Provide public access to river.
- ✓ Create a system of Riverway Streets
- ✓ Enhance the ecological function of river corridor.
- ✓ Link Upper River to Grand Rounds parkway system.
- ✓ Realize the area's potential for economic development.
- ✓ Establish urban design guidelines.

Major Benefits of Plan Implementation

- ◆ 90 acres of new park
- ◆ 15 miles of bike lanes and recreational trails
- ◆ 4 miles of restored riverbank
- ◆ 5.25 miles of parkway and boulevard
- ◆ 2,500 housing units in new riverfront neighborhoods
- ◆ 2,000 net additional jobs
- ◆ Over \$10 million in additional annual tax revenue



Upper River in Minneapolis

A New Era of Land Use

Land use in the Upper River corridor has been in a state of flux for the past 125 years, with a succession of bulk-material-processing and transport industries responding to market forces and rapid changes in available resources and technologies. This change can be understood by tracking the history of specific parcels of land. For example, the area along the west bank of the Mississippi north of Plymouth Ave. was used for saw mills, lumberyards, and foundries during the first era of the city’s settlement. When the supply of trees declined, the vacant land became a railroad yard stretching up past Broadway. After the rail yard became unnecessary with conversion from steam to diesel engines, the MCDA developed the current West River Road, with riverfront open space on one side, and the other lined with light industries such as printing plants and laboratories.

Current City policies encourage light-industrial and parks development on the Upper River, while also supporting old-line, bulk-material-handling industries with subsidies to the City-owned Upper Harbor Terminal. The Upper River Master Plan explores the potential benefits to completing a continuous riverfront park system on both banks of the Upper River, leading a transition away from barging and heavy industry to a new, more stable era of land use.

The Plan seeks the highest and best use of land adjacent to riverfront parks, including the development of new residential communities. Riverfront living is gaining in popularity in Minneapolis, and the Upper River affords some of the most enticing sites with excellent river views and quick access to downtown. Two major redevelopment areas are proposed on the west bank, including a mixed-use urban promenade district south of Lowry Avenue and a new residential neighborhood north of Lowry. The development of residential neighborhoods will produce many benefits including a higher value tax base, move-up housing for area residents, increased park security, and an enlarged constituency seeking continued improvements to the ecology of the river corridor and communities of north and northeast Minneapolis.

River and Recreation

The basis of all the benefits outlined in the Upper River Master Plan flow from a system of continuous public parks and open space along the Mississippi north of Plymouth Ave. Recreation trails along both banks of the river are paralleled by an extended West River Parkway and redesigned Marshall Street. A Riverway Street System, with common streetscape elements such as pedestrian lighting and signage, will connect north and northeast Minneapolis neighborhoods to new riverfront parks.

In addition to recreational amenities, the aesthetics and ecology of the river corridor will be restored through bank stabilization and revegetation. Wildlife habitat and improved bank conditions will attract more recreational boaters to the Upper River, as will new riverfront hospitality destinations. Overlooks, fishing piers, and boat rental concessions are planned to offer opportunities for visual and physical interaction with the river.



Old Sash and Door Factory - 1st Era



Barge Terminal - 2nd Era



Light Industry and Open Space - 3rd Era



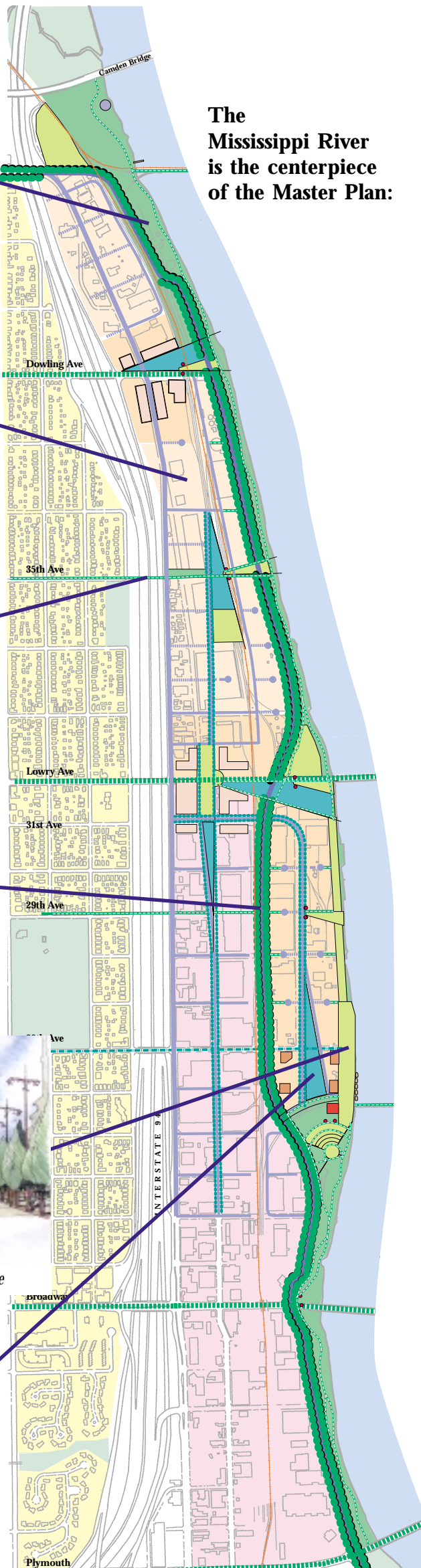
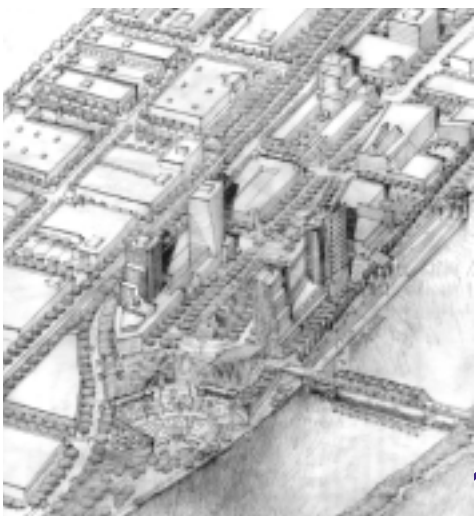
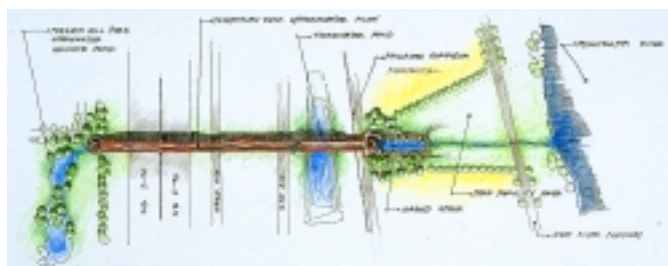
Riverfront Communities - 4th Era

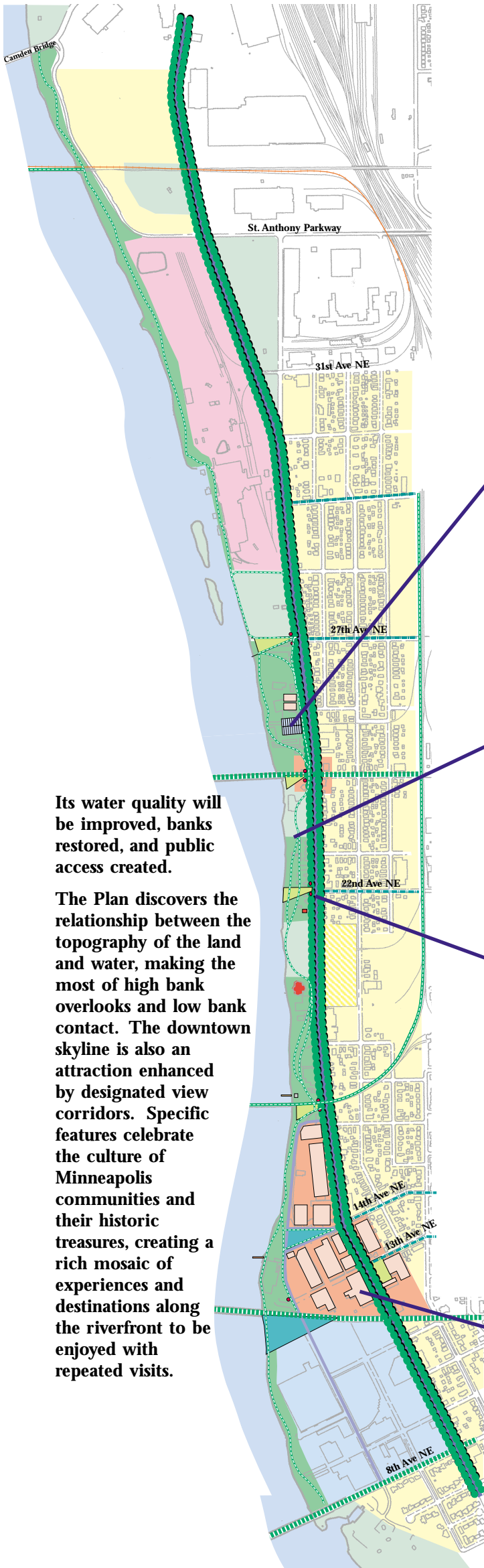


Skyline view on Upper River



Restoration along West River Parkway





Its water quality will be improved, banks restored, and public access created.

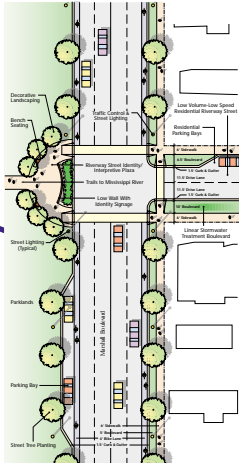
The Plan discovers the relationship between the topography of the land and water, making the most of high bank overlooks and low bank contact. The downtown skyline is also an attraction enhanced by designated view corridors. Specific features celebrate the culture of Minneapolis communities and their historic treasures, creating a rich mosaic of experiences and destinations along the riverfront to be enjoyed with repeated visits.



Botanical Gardens Park Feature



Riverbank Stabilization



Riverway Street System



Grain Belt Redevelopment

Issues Addressed by the Master Plan

Parks and Parkways Development

- * Creation of a continuous riverside park corridor is a primary objective of the Plan.
- * Recommendations are given on specific park areas, size of open space, and programming.
- * A wide variety of experiences are included, from an urban promenade to park landscaping focused on habitat restoration.
- * An innovative parkway alignment is suggested to remove vehicular traffic from a portion of the waterfront and buffer different land uses.

Access to the River

- * Current lack of access to the river is addressed by the Plan with new parks and trails along both banks.
- * A Riverway Street System is proposed to parallel new riverfront parks and connect to existing neighborhoods.
- * Two pedestrian decks over the interstate are included making a direct connection from north Minneapolis to the river.
- * A railroad bridge is identified for conversion to a pedestrian and bicycle boardwalk, while overlooks and boating facilities offer visual and physical contact with the water.

River Ecology

- * The Plan gives specific recommendations for riverbank stabilization and restoration to improve the ecological and visual condition of banks along the Upper River.
- * Water quality ponds are a key feature, designed to meet current standards for retaining and filtering run-off in redevelopment areas.
- * Wildlife habitat in the river corridor is increased and connected through landscape restoration proposals.

Neighborhood Renewal

- * Existing neighborhoods will receive major benefits from the planned parks, redesigned streets, and associated economic development. A regional park is outlined, to give north and northeast Minneapolis communities a waterfront amenity equal to those found in south Minneapolis, but a facility that also recognizes the unique culture and opportunities of the Upper River area.
- * Realization of the plan will raise property values on the city's north side, while providing an incentive for current residents to stay in their community. Public projects will act as a catalyst to private investment in existing and new housing stock, as well as new business starts.

Marshall Street

- * As a major thoroughfare along the river, Marshall Street is a key concern to residents of northeast Minneapolis and adjoining communities.
- * The Plan calls for a new streetscape along Marshall—greener, less cluttered, and safer.
- * As the boundary to a new continuous park, reconstruction of Marshall is expected to spur long-term private redevelopment of housing facing the river.

Commercial Navigation

- * The Plan discusses barging from the perspective of land use, concluding that large areas devoted to open storage of bulk materials return little to the City in terms of jobs and tax revenue.
- * Economics of lock and channel maintenance are explored, showing that public subsidies are high on this last stretch of the Mississippi lock system, and difficult to justify given alternatives in the region.

Heavy Industry

- * Conflicts between some heavy industries and nearby properties are unavoidable given the nature of these operations.
- * While these businesses provide needed services to society, the Plan confirms that the Upper River is too valuable and too close to existing neighborhoods and the heart of the city for this land use to continue indefinitely.
- * A transition to light industry and other land uses is recommended.

Grain Belt

- * One of the great architectural and cultural resources of the Upper River is the former Grain Belt Brewery complex.
- * The Plan proposes a mixed-use development focusing on meeting, hospitality, and entertainment facilities.

Housing Development

- * In a radical departure from past land uses along the Upper River, the Plan captures the true potential of planned park and parkway development by proposing major new residential developments.
- * A new neighborhood is planned for the west bank, allowing a richer mix of land uses and guaranteeing that the new parks will be used and safe.
- * The Plan creates a new space in which the City of Minneapolis can meet Metropolitan Council growth objectives.

Traffic

- * With the recommendation to phase out intermodal terminals as a land use on the Upper River, the corridor will experience fewer trucks and rail cars moving through.
- * At the regional scale, new residential development along the Upper River, within minutes of downtown and easily accessed by transit or bicycle, will take thousands of daily commuter trips off expressways.

Employment

- * A move away from bulk-material-handling industries to light manufacturing, back office, and research facilities is promoted as an overall objective of the Plan.
- * Riverfront park amenities will attract business development to designated areas on the west bank, with higher job densities and quality structures.
- * In addition to light manufacturing and office employment, new areas for riverfront hospitality and entertainment venues will provide opportunities for job creation in the service sector.

Summary of Recommendations

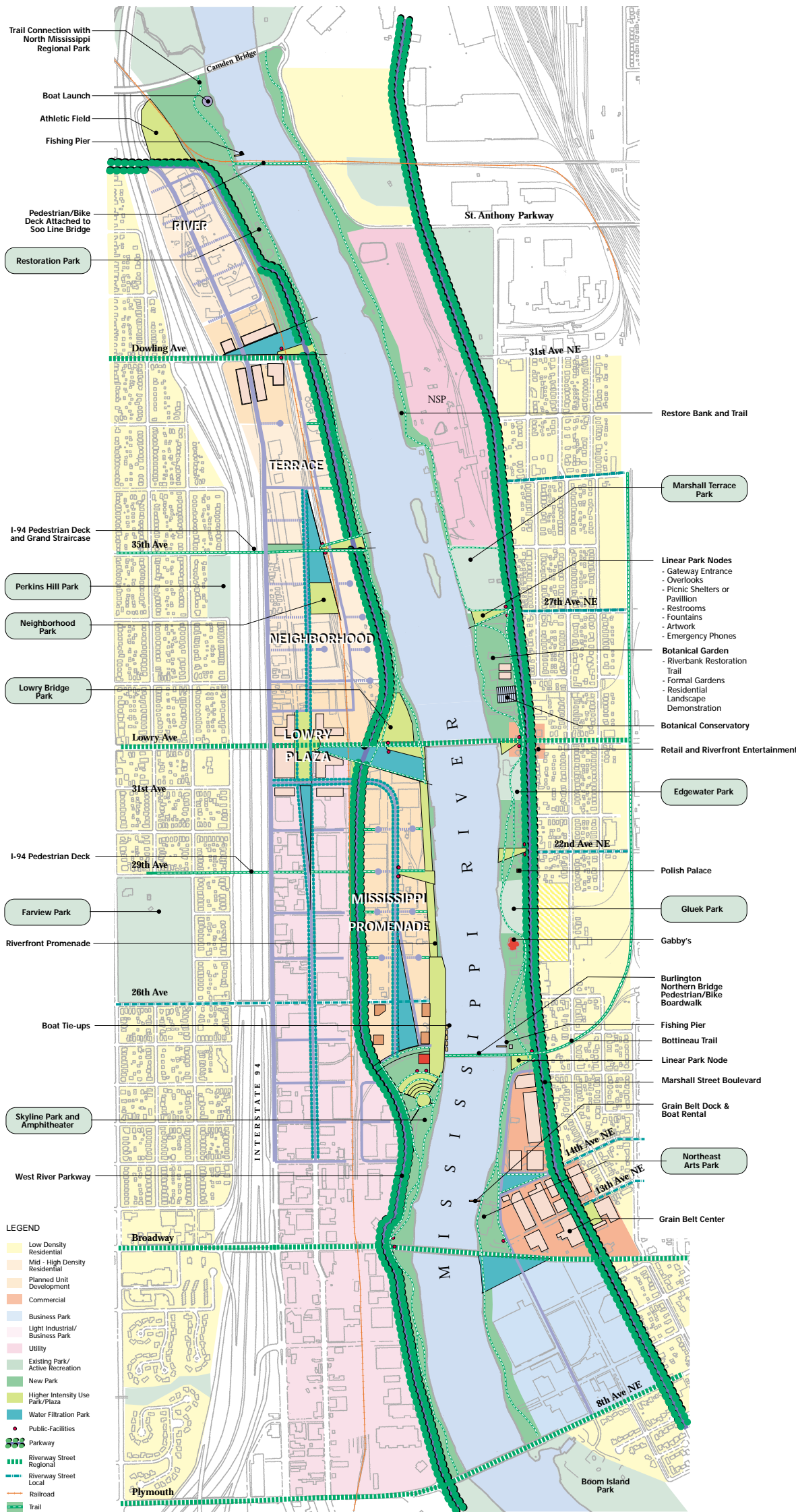
Parks, Urban Design, and Environmental Restoration

- Create a **continuous** and integrated riverfront **parks** and open space system long the Upper River.
- Construct recreational **trails along both banks** of the river.
- Provide space in parks for riverbank, landscape, and habitat **restoration**.
- Develop **waterfront features** in new parks, and **nodes** of interest at regular intervals along trails.
- Preserve **hospitality uses** within parks corridor.
- Establish a **Riverway Street System**, with common streetscape elements and signage that identify streets leading to and paralleling the riverfront.
- Designate no-build zones to hold **view corridors** to the river and downtown skyline.
- Construct a system of **area-wide water quality ponds** that meet the highest standards for stormwater retention and filtration.
- Extend **West River Parkway** to North Mississippi Regional Park.
- Convert the **BN Bridge** to a pedestrian and bicycle facility linking both banks.
- Reconstruct **Marshall Street** as a **boulevard**, with new landscaping and bicycle lanes.

Land Use and Implementation

- Establish an **Upper River Development Corporation** as a non-profit entity with the sole purpose of implementing the Upper River Master Plan.
- **Rezone** property in accordance with the Upper River Land Use Plan.
- **Close the Upper Harbor Terminal.**
- **Phase out heavy-industrial** uses in Upper River corridor.
- Transition land use in corridor to a **mix** of parks, residential, light-industrial, and commercial uses.
- Develop new **riverfront residential** and mixed-use **communities** on west bank.

Upper River Master Plan



Implementation Projects and Phasing

